

Steal This Hook! Faith and Deed

By Robert Wiese



Religion, in any world, is responsible for a great deal of war, intolerance, and death. Because religion brings out differences in values and beliefs, conflicts arise. Where there is conflict, there is adventure. And thus, in a world with different competing religions, adventurers find a lot more possibilities for wealth and power. This month's hooks all relate to religion -- specifically the religions of Eberron. Yes, get ready for an all-Eberron set of hooks.

Because religion is complex, the rewards that religious employers can offer vary beyond the usual gold and magic. Priests can offer spells, access to secret knowledge, initiation into secret mysteries, and even access to forbidden magic. Consider rewards for your player characters that cost the church little but look very valuable when using churches to sponsor adventures.

Symbolic Power -- *Eberron*

Lathleer, in Aundair, is a large town between Fairhaven and Ghalt on the House Orien trade road. It is the largest town in that part of Aundair, and it serves as a trading center for the farmers who live in the countryside all around. The people are simple, for the most part, and follow the Sovereign Host. Their temple is run by Baltia Serontain, the ranking priestess of Boldrei in the nation. Baltia and the Vassals that serve with her keep the town safe and spiritually aware.



Baltia is the ranking priestess in Lathleer because she possesses a unique holy symbol that incorporates a Siberys dragonshard. By her own telling, she was led by Boldrei to this rare symbol; she did not seek it out herself. Nor did she seek out the position of importance that came with it, though she does not shirk from whatever service the Host requires.

This afternoon, people gathered for a ritual to ask Boldrei's favor on the construction of some new houses. They waited and waited. Finally another Vassal was sent and found Baltia unconscious in her private chambers within the temple. Her holy symbol was gone. Another Vassal filled in at the ritual, and soon Baltia's personal assistant was on the streets looking for adventurers.

d100 Motivations

01-50 Baltia wants the symbol back because it has personal meaning to her; Boldrei led her to it and clearly intended that she safeguard it for the present.

51-80 Baltia has been corrupted a little by her position, and she wants the symbol back as quietly as possible so

that her position as ranking priest is not jeopardized.

81-00 Baltia is dead, and this is a doppelganger that is replacing her. The doppelganger is worried that the theft, no matter whether the holy symbol is returned or not, will expose its position and the network of criminals that it is tied to, and it would like to avoid exposure. If it cannot, it will arrange for Baltia's "death" to divert suspicion from itself.

d100 Complications

01-25 Baltia was placed here deliberately by other clerics and the royal family. The Siberys dragonshard is keyed to rebuke members of House Cannith (or Orien, or whichever works for you) and Baltia was one link in Queen Aurala's secret force. She won't be pleased that someone discovered the secret of the dragonshard and stole it, but she might reward handsomely those who recover it, especially if no witnesses are left behind.

26-50 The dragonshard piece is part of a larger artifact that was broken off during the Age of Demons. Boldrei "placed it" in Baltia's keeping so that demons from Khyber would not find it. Some rakshasas have discovered its location and sent demons to retrieve it so they could rebuild the artifact.

51-75 The artifact was stolen by Karnathi agents of the Blood of Vol, who wanted to explore a lost House Cannith foundry at the edge of the Mournland. They believed that the holy symbol would give them power over the supposed traps that House Cannith left behind. The PCs have to chase the Emerald Claw and Blood of Vol villains through the foundry's passages and past construct defenders.

76-00 The holy symbol was stolen by a rival faction of the Sovereign Host that wants to come into control of religion in Lathleer. These Vassals know that the holy symbol is what gives Baltia her status, and so without harming her they can remove her from "power" and attain power themselves simply by removing (and possibly destroying) the holy symbol. It is on the way to a place to be destroyed as the PCs investigate.

Figment of Your Imagination -- Eberron

Silvertide (14 Lharvion) is the holy day among followers of the Silver Flame that commemorates the lycanthropic purge. At Silver Flame temples across Khorvaire, festivals are held, dramas performed, and sermons preached. Aruldusk, in southeastern Thrane, is a small city that follows the Silver Flame devoutly and enjoys a measure of importance and rising prominence. The devotion is due to the nature of the Thranes there, and the rising prominence is due to the lightning rail that passes through the city on its way north and south.

Campaign Adaptation

Here are some suggestions for different campaign worlds. *Faiths of Eberron* describes dragonshard holy symbols and the religion of the Sovereign Host in great detail. In other campaign worlds, you will need to create a holy symbol artifact of some kind, since the dragonshards don't translate well to other worlds.

Forgotten Realms: The gods of Faerûn are ever-present, so this adventure can really go anywhere so long as you can supply the artifact holy symbol. Mulhorand or Unther might be really good choices though, since they are somewhat more theocratic than other places.

d20 Modern: You may have to strip the powers of the artifact holy symbol, but the basic concept should work in many locations, since religion is a strong force in most countries. If you place your campaign in the Middle East, you'll find that Islam has different factions (and factions of the same religion are one aspect of the adventure hook).





The day of Silvertide in Aruldusk is a festive occasion, as it is everywhere. Youths of the church dramatize the important battles of the lycanthropic purge and display the greatness of the Purifieds that overcame the dread shapechangers. In the afternoon, people gather in front of the temple of the Silver Flame to hear the ranking priest, Ossul Desekhal, give an inspired sermon. Ossul steps from within the church and takes his place at a raised pulpit and raises his hands to silence the cheers that greet his appearance. And then, without a word, he disappears.

Panic ensues, and Purifieds begin using magic and interrogation to determine where Ossul has been taken. What they find is that there is no lingering magic that indicates Ossul was teleported, and he cannot be found anywhere in the vicinity even with *true seeing* spells. He simply vanished into thin air.

Some members of the church, fearing that evil has infiltrated their midst, turn to good-aligned PCs to thwart this evil and recover their missing priest.

d100 Motivations

01-50 A group of paladins contacts the PCs because the PCs are outside the situation. They are sincere in wanting Ossul back and in wanting to know what happened to him.

51-75 One of the priests did discover an illusion, and at the start of the sermon she cast *dispel magic* to expose the corruption she is certain has infested the church. However, she works behind the scenes and does not hire or assist the PCs directly.

76-00 Two priests discovered Ossul missing early in the day, and so they created* this illusion to prevent an uproar on the holy day. They fully intend to investigate Ossul's disappearance, but in secret. However, their power was not enough to maintain the illusion for as long as needed. Now that the focus of Ossul's disappearance has shifted, they contact the PCs to do the investigation they intended to do.

*If one of your complications has Ossul or someone else creating his own illusion, then you can decide whether the priests also discover the illusion or if they created the illusion to cover for Ossul.

d100 Complications

01-50 Ossul was an illusion, one created of magic and shadow-stuff from the Plane of Shadow. The real Ossul was kidnapped a week or so ago, and he is in the hand of priests of the Blood of Vol in Karrnath. He is alive, but soon may become an undead in service to Vol.

51-65 Ossul was always a being of evil, either undead or

Campaign Adaptation

Here are some suggestions for different campaign worlds. *Faiths of Eberron* describes the churches of the Silver Flame and the Blood of Vol. Depending on where you take the adventure, you could find *Races of the Wild* useful, and if you take it into Khyber, then books on the Underdark will be most helpful.

Forgotten Realms: The Silver Flame is similar to the **Forgotten Realms** deity Tyr, but you could draw comparisons with Lathander, Torm, or Selûne as well. So, this adventure might go very well in Silverymoon or the Dalelands.

d20 Modern: An illusionary priest would be the product of magic or of alien technology. Thus, this adventure could fit very well into any part of your campaign

possessed by a demon. He worked quietly to undermine the faith in Aruldusk, and he had made some progress. Last week, he became afraid that one of the priests had discovered his true nature and so he devised this means to escape before he was exposed.

where aliens are trying to exert control over the people of Earth (or some other planet).

66-85 There never was an Ossul Desekhal. A group of other priests created him as a figurehead through whom they could exert control (and focus on the evil they were interested in) without publicly being in charge.

86-00 Ossul Desekhal is not missing at all. He arranged for the illusion of himself so that he could go on a secret mission to thwart some rakshasas from Khyber. The dispelling of the illusion creates problems for him as the PCs come after him and complicate his mission.

Underground Railroad -- *Eberron*

The area around Vulyar, in southern Karrnath, is very rural, even though a House Orien trade road and a lightning rail line pass through the town. The area suffered a lot of damage during the Last War, and the military is still repairing roads, military facilities, and even town buildings. The force of warforged that are assigned to the garrison at Vulyar work under the orders of Captain Sigor Thul and his two squads of humanoid warriors.



Some time ago, warforged began disappearing. At first the losses seemed to come from attacks, but the trickle of warforged became a slow flow, and Captain Thul is now worried that some enemy is picking off his force. Most of the disappearances occur in the rural areas where warforged work on the roads and local barns, but some warforged seem to disappear from within Vulyar itself.

After sending several warforged and three of his humanoid fighters, and learning nothing, Captain Thul approaches adventurers with an offer of reward if they can find out what is happening to his warforged. They are quite valuable, and he cannot just "write them off."

d100 Motivations

01-50 Captain Thul is sincere, and he is not hiding anything from the PCs. Warforged really are disappearing.

51-90 Captain Thul's adjutant is a warforged who is allied with the Lord of Blades, and it is helping in the arrangements to send

Campaign Adaptation

Expand warforged beyond Eberron with these suggestions. *Faiths of Eberron* describes the Lord of Blades in more detail than you'll find in the ***Eberron Campaign Setting***.

Forgotten Realms: Okay, there are no warforged in Faerûn, so you'd have to replace the warforged with some other race that would be enslaved, such as raptorans or goliaths or saurials, with the

converted warforged into the Mournland. This warforged informs its allies and works to hinder the PCs as much as possible without being discovered.

91-00 Captain Thul hates warforged and would not mind at all if they all disappeared except that they are valuable and he knows that his superiors would take any cost of lost warforged out of his personal wealth or his hide.

d100 Complications

01-50 Just before the disappearances began, a warforged evangelist of the Lord of Blades arrived in Vulyar and began quietly proselytizing to the warforged assigned to Captain Thul. This warforged set up an underground railroad of sorts to smuggle warforged out of Karrnath and into the Mournland. Many of the warforged that have disappeared were converted to the cause of the Lord of Blades and sent away by this means.

51-75 An effigy bulette, created by House Cannith near the end of the Last War, has been plaguing the farmers in the vicinity for a few weeks (or months) now. No one who has seen it has lived.

76-00 Some of the missing warforged were abducted by priests of the Blood of Vol. Vol and her followers are interested in trying to convert warforged into undead, especially the intelligent forms. The warforged could have been requisitioned from the military for experimentation, but these priests are working in secret and do not want to be found out.

followers of the Lord of Blades replaced by sympathetic humans or elves. You could even set it in Thay using human slaves in the role of the warforged. Or, you could actually bring some warforged to Faerûn by having a ship of them crash near a civilization center. They might be considered as constructs rather than as people and put to work for that reason. The role of the followers of the Lord of Blades in this case might be followers of Gond who see them as wondrous sentient creations that should be free.

d20 Modern: Finding warforged in the world may be difficult, but there is no reason that they cannot appear. After all, other fantasy creatures can appear as shadow creatures in **Urban Arcana** campaigns. And there are other planets as well in a modern or future setting. But, you could easily replace them with some other kinds of self-aware robots (a la *Dr. Who*). The adventure might work best on another planet where robot slaves perform labor in areas that humans need gear just to survive.

About the Author

Robert Wiese entered the gaming hobby through the Boy Scouts and progressed from green recruit to head of the most powerful gaming fan organization in the world. He served as head of the RPGA Network for almost seven years, overseeing the creation of the **Living Greyhawk** and **Living Force** campaigns, among other achievements. Eventually, he returned to private life in Reno, Nevada, where he spends as much time as possible with his wife, new son Owen, and many pets.

He is still involved in writing, organizing conventions, and playing, and he models proteins for the Biochemistry Department of the University of Nevada, Reno.

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